

**Montana Department  
of  
Fish, Wildlife & Parks**



2300 Lake Elmo Drive  
Billings, MT 59105  
August 7, 1996

TO:

Environmental Quality Council  
Director's Office, Dept. of Environmental Quality  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
    Director's Office  
    Resource Assessment  
    Fisheries Division  
    Parks Division  
    Regional Supervisors  
    Lands Section  
Montana Historical Society, State Preservation Office  
Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council  
Montana Wildlife Federation  
Montana State Library  
George Ochenski  
Montana Environmental Information Center

Ladies and Gentlemen:

An Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared for the Initial Rock Fishing Access Site acquisition at Rock Creek near Roberts, Montana.

The scope of the proposed project has been determined to be sufficient to initiate the HB 495 (Section 23-1-110, MC) process. Both the Montana Environmental Policy Act and HB 495 report considerations are included in the following document. The specific items required in HB 495 are identified on the EA checklist and addressed in the comments of those respective sections.

Any questions or comments on this project should be addressed to the undersigned by September 13, 1996.

Sincerely,

Jim Darling  
Regional Fisheries Manager  
(406) 247-2961

Carlson 2

**MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS**  
2300 Lake Elmo Drive, Billings, MT 59105  
(406) 247-2940

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

Project Title Initial Rock FAS

Division/Bureau Fisheries

Program \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Project Acquisition of approximately 2.5 acres  
along Rock Creek near Roberts, Montana, to allow anglers access.

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**POTENTIAL IMPACT ON PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

	MAJOR	MODERATE	MINOR	NONE	UNKNOWN	COMMENTS ON ATTACHED PAGES
1. Terrestrial & aquatic life and habitats				X		
2. Water quality, quantity & distribution				X		
3. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture				X		
4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality				X		
5. Aesthetics			X			HB 495
6. Air quality				X		
7. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources				X		HB 495 Site capacity
8. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
9. Historical & archaeological sites				X		HB 495

# POTENTIAL IMPACT ON HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

	MAJOR	MODERATE	MINOR	NONE	UNKNOWN	COMMENTS ON ATTACHED PAGES
1. Social structures & mores				X		
2. Cultural uniqueness & diversity				X		
3. Local & state tax base & tax revenue				X		
4. Agricultural or industrial production				X		
5. Human health				X		
6. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income			X			HB 495 Tourism
7. Access to & quality of recreational and wilderness activities			X			
8. Quantity & distribution of employment				X		
9. Distribution & density of population & housing				X		
10. Demands for government services				X		HB 495 Maintenance
11. Industrial & commercial activity						
12. Demands for energy				X		
13. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals				X		
14. Transportation networks & traffic flows				X		
15. Site specific modification system-wide				X		

Other groups or agencies contacted or which may have overlapping jurisdiction \_\_\_\_\_

Individuals or groups contributing to this EA \_\_\_\_\_

Recommendation concerning preparation of EIS No EIS required

EA prepared by : Jim Darling

Date: August 7, 1996



**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**  
**Acquisition of a Fishing Access Site on Rock Creek**  
**near Roberts, Montana**

Prepared by  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
August 1, 1996

**General Purpose:** The 1977 Montana Legislature enacted statute 87-1-605 which directs the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) to acquire, develop and operate a system of fishing accesses. The legislation established an earmarked funding account to ensure that this function would be accomplished. Acquisition of this site near Roberts will provide access to Rock Creek for anglers and other recreationists.

**I. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION**

**A. Location of the Property**

The approximately 2½ acre site is located in Township 5 South, Range 21 East, Section 32 (Carbon County). It is adjacent to a county road and bounded by a county road right-of-way (ROW) just outside (east) of Roberts (Figure 1). Roberts is 47 miles southwest of Billings (Figure 2).

**B. Need for the Action**

The total estimated fishing pressure in Montana for 1993 was 2,300,763 angler days. In 1995, the Fishing Access Site (FAS) program had 312 sites distributed across the state in all major drainages. This program is an essential component of fisheries management in Montana because a large percentage of the angler use is achieved through these sites.

The estimated fishing pressure on Rock Creek was 16,142 angler days in 1993. With the recent increase in the population of Billings and Red Lodge, it is likely the pressure has increased since 1993. Local anglers currently use the old county road ROW for access.

Trout Unlimited is anxious to commit funds from the Matt Olsen estate, and the property owner is ready to sell.

**C. Scope of Acquisition and Development**

Acquisition of ~2.5 acres of property along Rock Creek is proposed for incorporation into the Department's FAS program. This site will also incorporate part of an existing Carbon County road ROW. The nearest access is Water Birch FAS four miles upstream, with no access downstream.

Eventual site development could include fencing, a parking area, and a latrine. Trout Unlimited has expressed an interest in devoting time and money toward site development. A plaque will be erected noting that the site was acquired in memory of Matt Olsen who encouraged fly-fishing.

## II. IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

Please review the attached checklist.

### A. Impacts to the Physical Environment

#### 5. Aesthetics

HB 495 requires consideration of the site's capacity for development. The site has already been disturbed by trenching of an old ditch and by water and gas pipeline crossings. The site is bounded by an old paved county road. Aesthetics will be improved when the trench is filled, a new fence is installed, and a designated parking area is provided. The latrine should not detract significantly.

9. Acquisition will not affect historical or archeological sites.

### B. Impacts on the Human Environment

#### 6. Quantity and distribution of Community and Personal Income -- HB 495 Requirement - Tourism

See the section below entitled, "Commercial Activity."

#### 7. Access to and Quality of Recreational Activities.

Activities at this traditional access may be restricted if the site is not purchased by Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

#### 10. Demands on Government Services -- HB 495 Requirement - Long Range Maintenance of the Improvements.

Litter patrol, latrine maintenance, fence patrol and site condition reports for this small site should not exceed \$500 annually.

#### 11. Commercial Activity -- HB 495 Requirement - Impact on Tourism

This acquisition and construction project proposal should maintain the site aesthetics and will have negligible impacts on the local economy or human distribution. This project will simply make river access more convenient for the angling public. The site project is not large enough to constitute a major attraction.

#### 15. HB 495 Requirement - Describe how this project relates to the entire Fishing Access Site system, as a whole.

This project is minimal in scope and is therefore within the conservative intent of the entire system. There is nothing being proposed at this site that could be interpreted as a divergence from past management.

Strategic Planning accomplished by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks during 1992 has set five goals. Goal B is to "Provide parks resources while maintaining our commitment to improve landowner-sportsperson relations." The Fishing Access Site project is intended to accomplish this goal of providing expanded opportunity.



## II. DISCUSSION AND EVALUATION OF REASONABLE ALTERNATIVE

### 1) The "No Action" Alternative

If this property is not acquired the following situations are likely to occur:

- a. The recreational use at this site and along this reach of Rock Creek may be reduced if this traditional public access is closed by a new landowner.
- b. Funds available from the Matt Olsen Estate via Trout Unlimited will be redirected elsewhere rather than to purchase and develop this site.

### 2) The Proposed Alternative

The Vogele property acquisition is an effort to provide fishing access and site facilities at a reasonable management level. The project will result in the following:

- a. Continued use of a traditional access which may otherwise be closed to fishing if sold to private interests.
- b. A responsible level of management of the site, including control of noxious weeds and litter.
- c. An increase in angler use once facilities are provided.
- d. Dedication of private funds to fishing access along the stream the donor most wanted to involve.

## IV. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CONCLUSIONS SECTION

### 1) Is an EIS required? No

This review has demonstrated that the impacts associated with this project are not significant. The net result of the proposed action is to maintain existing positive aspects of the human and physical environment.

### 2) Describe the level of public involvement. HB 495 requirements of statewide advertising do not pertain to acquisitions.

Legal notices will be placed in the Billings Gazette and Helena Independent Record.

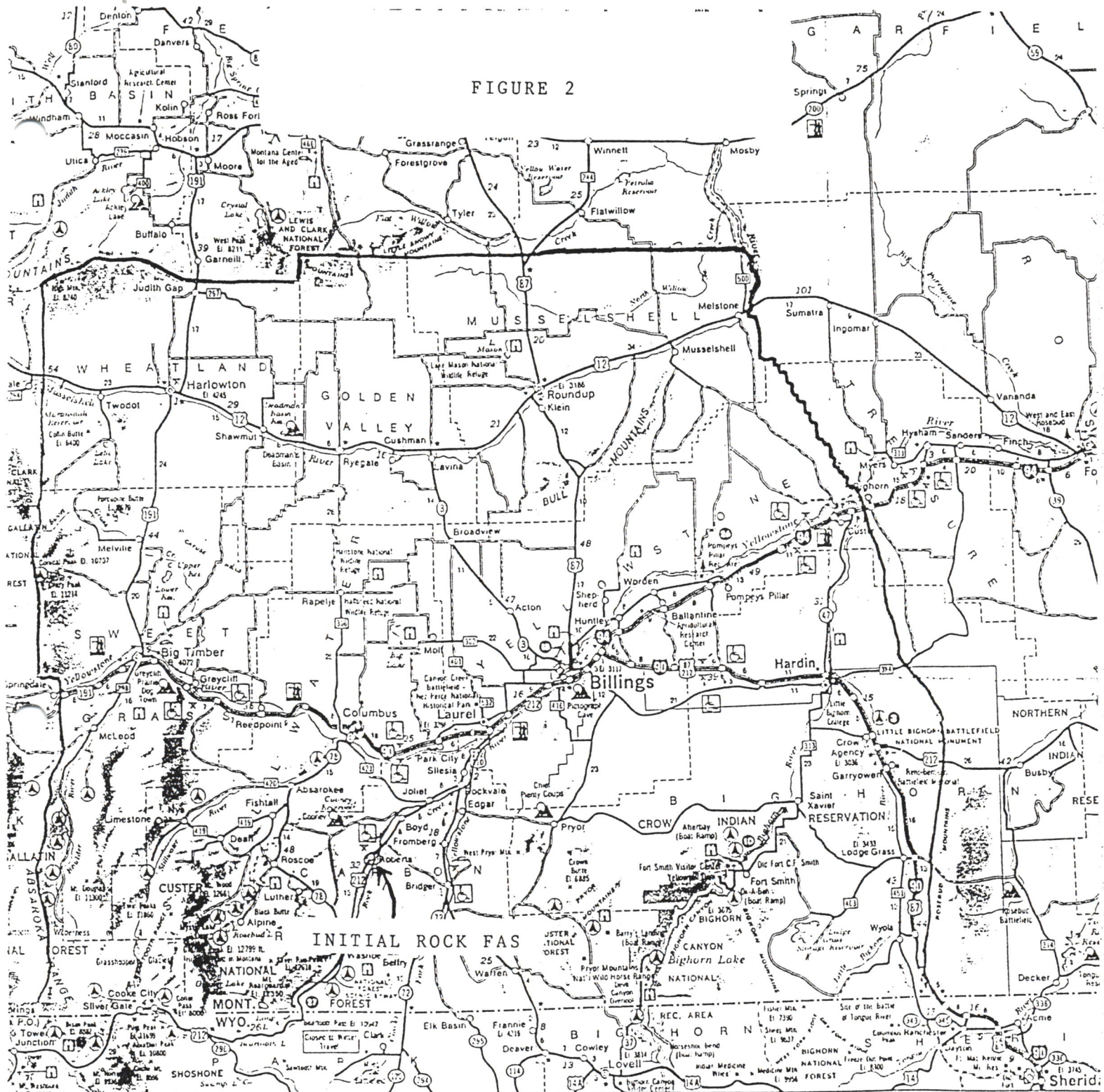
### 3) Duration of comment will extend to September 13, 1996.

### 4) Name, title, address and phone number of person responsible for preparing the EA document.

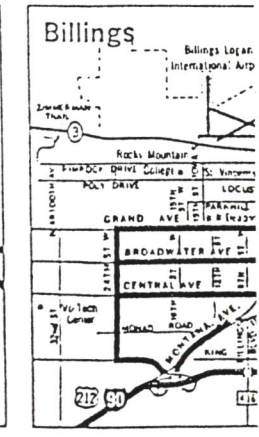
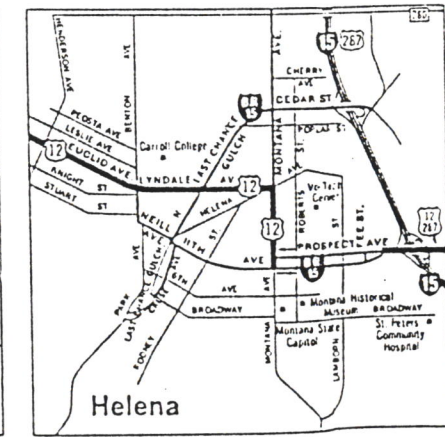
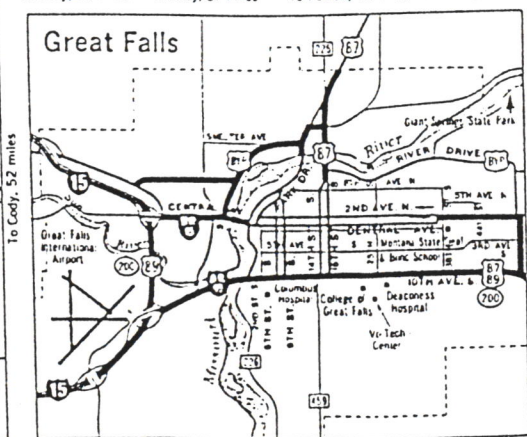
Jim Darling  
Fisheries Manager  
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
2300 Lake Elmo Drive  
Billings, Montana 59105



FIGURE 2



To Cody, 63 miles To Cody, 57 miles To Powell, 16 miles To Powell, 15 miles To Greybull, 33 miles To Ranchester, 53 miles To Greybull, 81 miles To Buffalo, 35 miles

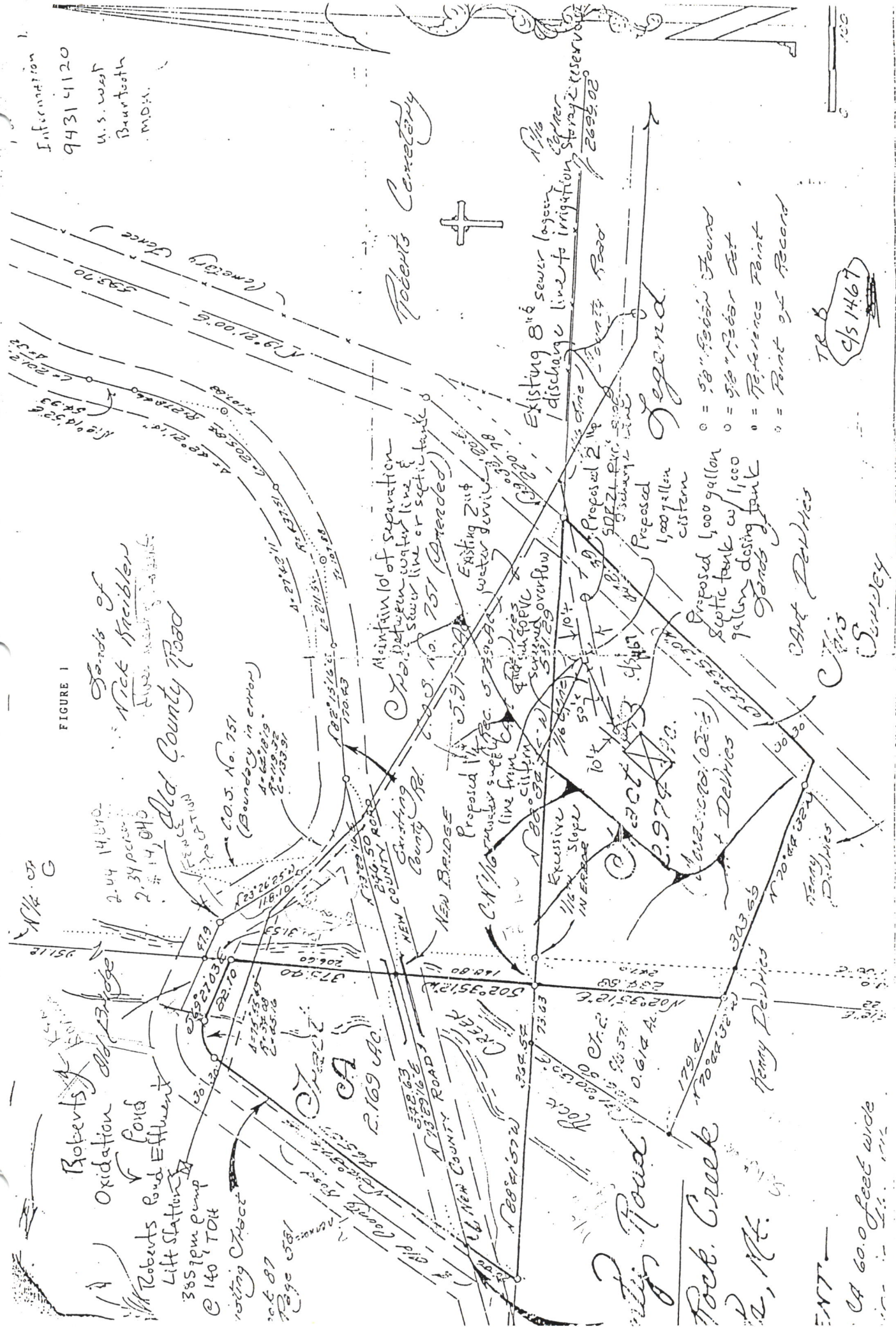


The West, South, East, and Northeast Entrances to Yellowstone National Park are closed to automobile travel from about November 1st through April 30th of each year.



Information  
94314120  
U.S. West  
Baurtooth  
M.D.A.

FIGURE 1



TR 8  
C/S 1467

Cart Debris  
C/S  
Survey

ENT-  
CA 60.0 feet wide